



## PARSHAS TOLDOS – ELLIOTT DELLA

During this weeks sedra we read the 90-well known episode of the way Isaac was tricked by Jacob and Rebecca. This deviousness is not the sort of behaviour we would expect from the patriarchs so what is the reason for it?.

In this sedra sheet I will look at some comments from Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch and his successor and son-in-law Rav Dr. Salomon Breuer at K'hal Adath Jeshurun (Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft) Frankfurt-am-Main.

Rav Hirsch states, Knowing that Jacob would object to her plan, Rebecca exercises her maternal authority expecting him to be blindly obedient and therefore she takes responsibility for the plan to deceive Isaac so that Esau does not get the blessing.

Rav Hirsch asks – What is Rebecca's intention in thinking that by crudely covering Jacob in "a couple of goat skins" this will convince Isaac that it is Esau in front of him?

Yet Rav Hirsch points out that how "blind" Isaac is to Esau's complete unworthiness by his choice to marry two Hittite women. Yet this did not open Isaac's eyes; and we see Isaac wanting to bless Esau to make him his successor to lead the House of Abraham.

Rav Hirsch continues by explaining from the extra word נָא we see that Rebecca had probably been persuading Isaac not give Esau the blessing and to delay giving the blessings, but to no avail. She now had to show Isaac how easily he could be deceived.

Rav Breuer explains that as Isaac prepared to give the successors blessing to Esau; Rebecca knew that she could no longer remain inactive without the result being a terrible Chillul Hashem in the eyes of the non-Jewish world. This had to be avoided at all costs.

This was Rebecca's desperate attempt to show Isaac the true colours of Esau- Only Jacob could open Isaac's eyes and prove to Isaac that Esau was not deserving of a blessing. For Jacob to go against his core trait of Justice showed Isaac just how easily he had been deceived by Esau. The plan worked perfectly and Isaac realised how he had been deceived by Esau.

Based on this episode, Rav Breuer asks, does cunning and shrewdness have a justification in human life?

Rav Breuer explains that no human trait is either good or bad in itself. It all depends on the proper usage of the character trait. G-d has given us these character traits and they all have their value and justification provided they are used for the good and in the spirit of Torah.

Cunning and Shrewdness are generally thought of as being evil qualities, however our Sages said 'be shrewd, be cunning in the fear of G-d' The Sages would not want to promote the principal of "the end justifies the means". They wanted to show us how cunning and shrewdness can be used to help the weak. For example as a tactic to persuade a poor person to take help or charity, providing no law is violated.

**IN MEMORY OF MY GRANDMA שרה דבורה בת לב שלום**

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